



## THE VIRGINIA EXPLORER

In this and future issues, *Virginia Golfer* will be featuring in-state and out-of-state destinations to help you get the most out of your travel opportunities.



### BAY CREEK

Championship golf at two courses and spectacular views predominate at Bay Creek Resort & Club

# Breakwater Beckoning

Complementing memorable golf experiences with a captivating setting, Eastern Virginia affords golfers the chance to renew and unwind *BY J. ERIC ECKARD*

**W**HEN LOOKING AT GOLF IN Eastern Virginia, it would be easy to focus solely on Bay Creek Resort & Club in Cape Charles.

After all, with a pair of courses designed by two of the most recognized names in the

game, Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer, Bay Creek symbolizes the greatest golf rivalry of all time. It's also one of the few spots on the planet where you can find layouts designed by these two legends in such close proximity.

But with Bay Creek blinders on, golfers

looking for an experience in Eastern Virginia would miss out on some of the best courses in the commonwealth. From the Northern Neck to the Eastern Shore, Virginia boasts a mini-golf excursion that rivals those more well-known trails in Alabama, Tennessee and Florida.

## BAY CREEK

A scenic atmosphere abounds as golfers play the par-4 second hole at the Palmer Course.



### THE STUFF OF LEGENDS

Just across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel from Norfolk sits Bay Creek Resort & Club ([www.baycreek.net](http://www.baycreek.net), 757-331-8620), nestled between the bay and Old Plantation Creek. Palmer and Nicklaus both used the natural settings to create courses that appear woven into the landscape, a vision that resort owner Dickie Foster encouraged. The finishing holes, which run parallel up to a shared clubhouse, are lined with more than 40,000 roses.

The Palmer Course was built first in 2001, and the Nicklaus Course was constructed four years later. Since then, the two tracks have been battling it out for national accolades and awards, much like their designers did during the golden age of golf. Bay Creek is the only place where both masters have contributed a signature design for play every day for any golfer in Virginia.

While both courses offer similar settings—holes along the water, plenty of sand and a plethora of plant life—both reflect the different design perspectives. The Nicklaus Course features smallish, undulating greens and more than 100 bunkers to compel accurate approach shots. The 7,250-yard Palmer Course features larger greens and bunkers that abut water on several holes, and its rolling fairways often require golfers to play from uneven lies.

Both layouts offer five sets of tees, and are highlighted by signature par 3s. The third hole at Palmer features an island green that fronts the Chesapeake Bay, while the fourth at Nicklaus also overlooks the Bay.

A VSGA VIP participating course, cardholders can play either course in September and receive a special gift. Just present your VSGA VIP Card at check-in and you will receive a complimentary sleeve of premium golf balls.

### THROWBACK TRACK

Heading south back through the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, golfers can discover another course with spectacular views of the

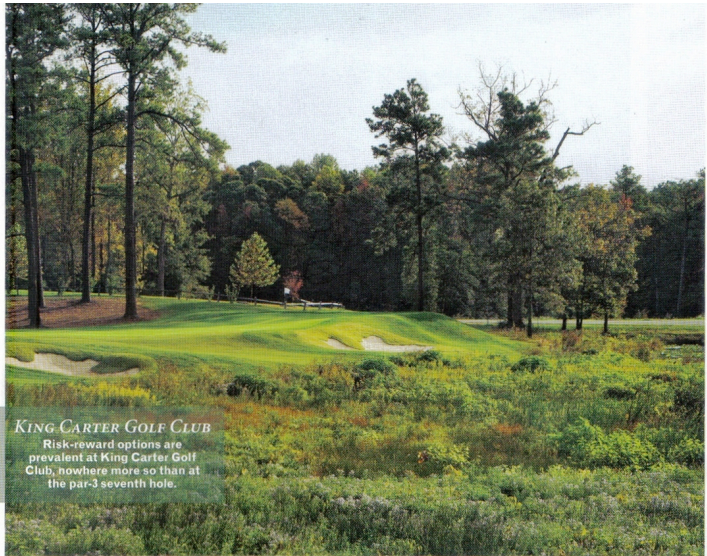
water in Nansemond River Golf Club ([www.nansemondrivergolfclub.com](http://www.nansemondrivergolfclub.com), 757-539-4356), which opened in 1999. Just on the outskirts of Tidewater, the Nansemond River course looks almost like a links-style layout rather than a parkland course that one might typically find in the area.

Designer Tom Steele also preserved much of the landscape of the riverfront property while creating a course that features 14 holes on the water. Several holes offer panoramic views of the Nansemond River, including No. 13, where golfers can see down the river about five miles.

The 7,241-yard course offers several risk-reward par 5s, but its signature hole is No. 17, a short downhill par 4 that plays to an island green. The club offers VSGA VIP cardholders one play on Mondays and Tuesdays, excluding holidays.

### PLENTY OF OPTIONS

Less than an hour north on the Virginia Peninsula sits Kiln Creek Golf Club and Resort ([www.kilncreekgolf.com](http://www.kilncreekgolf.com), 757-988-3220), a Tom Clark design that opened in 1991. Although originally built around a



### KING CARTER GOLF CLUB

Risk-reward options are prevalent at King Carter Golf Club, nowhere more so than at the par-3 seventh hole.

residential community, Kiln Creek features a 16-room inn and restaurant to complement a championship course.

With several manmade lakes and a slew of bunkers, Kiln Creek typifies the parkland golf course whose corridors are defined by trees. At one point, the course featured 122 bunkers, but renovations over the years have dropped that number to around 90.

The par-4 eighth hole, a dogleg right over one of the 6,972-yard course's manmade ponds, includes a series of bunkers on the left side, putting shot placement at a premium. In all, the course's signature hole has eight bunkers, including a large one that protects the entire right side of the putting surface. The par-4 finishing hole features a two-tiered green and a pond on the right.

As you head that way in the late-fall, bring your VSGA VIP card, as the course offers four plays Monday-Friday anytime or Saturdays and Sundays after 1 p.m. in November and December.

Another hour north in Virginia's Northern Neck, designer Joel Weiman of McDonald & Sons created a short yet visually intimidating course that offers two distinct nines in King Carter Golf Club ([www.kingcartergolfclub.com](http://www.kingcartergolfclub.com), 804-435-7842). Opened in 2005, King Carter's outward half is wide open, flat and a few holes play along vineyards, while the inward nine is tree-lined and features elevation changes.

With few bunkers and an overall length of slightly more than 6,800 yards from the championship markers, some golfers might begin their round with a little overconfidence. But with thick rough, forced carries and slightly sloping greens, King Carter plays slightly longer than the scorecard indicates.

One of the layout's most challenging holes is the short par-4 16th, which features a split fairway that offers a true test of strategy. Those electing to play it safe may favor the left side, which usually leaves a wedge shot to the green. Longer hitters can take a more

aggressive line and choose an angle down the right in an effort to reach the green with a bold tee shot. The gamble has paid off at least once, head golf professional J.D. Wilson notes, when a hole-in-one was scored at No. 16 last year.

With unique design qualities, including jagged-edge bunkering, King Carter participates in the VSGA VIP Card Program with two plays Monday-Thursday through Nov. 11.

### WORTHY, WATERY ESCAPE

With an 18-hole championship course and a nine-hole executive par-3 course, the Tides Inn luxury resort offers guests plenty of activities. Just a few miles from King Carter, Golden Eagle Golf Club ([www.tidesinn.com](http://www.tidesinn.com), 804-438-4460) is spread out over 500 acres overlooking Carters Creek near the Chesapeake Bay.

George Cobb and John LaFoy carved out the 7,000-plus yard Golden Eagle from a densely wooded area around a 50-acre lake,

which sits off the main campus of the Tides Inn. Built in 1976, the Golden Eagle puts a premium on accuracy with strategic bunkering and postage stamp-sized greens.

Locals and those who have played the Golden Eagle know the course for the fifth hole, which has been called the "toughest par 4 no one's ever heard of." From the back tees, it plays 463 yards, and the tee shot must carry 180 yards over water, leaving an 180-200 yard shot to the putting surface that is guarded by water. With a sloping fairway toward the hazard, distance control – and a little luck – are essential elements in successfully navigating this hole. Late-fall travelers and VSGA VIP cardholders can enjoy the Golden Eagle at a discounted rate as the course offers five plays in November and December.

With the Tides Inn overlooking Carters Creek, many guests come to the resort looking for more than golf. Whether it's a relaxing excursion in a canoe, kayaking, or taking lessons at the Premier Sailing School, a day on the water is just one of the many offerings at the Tides Inn.

The resort also has a 60-slip marina, gourmet dining, tennis courts, children's programs and a full-service spa, which features such treatments as a seaweed leaf wrap and a soothing stones massage.

#### TARTAN TREAT

Less than four miles away sits The Tartan Golf Club ([www.tartangolfclub.com](http://www.tartangolfclub.com), 804-438-6005), one of the older golf courses in the region. A links-style layout, The Tartan was sculpted in part by Sir Guy Campbell, a former British officer who gave up a military career to design golf courses throughout the United Kingdom. Opened in 1959, The Tartan is Campbell's only track in the United States.



#### GOLDEN EAGLE GOLF CLUB

The par-3 eighth hole at the Golden Eagle Golf Club presents a stern shotmaking test.

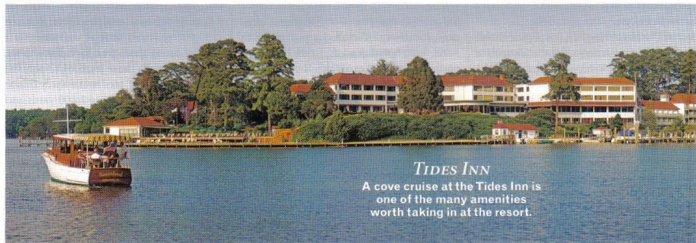
Campbell, who also cared for the courses at St. Andrews, Scotland, died in 1960 after nine holes of the Tartan were completed. The project was completed by Cobb and LaFoy, who designed the Golden Eagle at the nearby Tides Inn.

Campbell's philosophy of using natural hazards instead of incorporating lots of sand is apparent at The Tartan. The course features just 27 bunkers along its tree-lined layout. With a Donald Ross look, the relatively short course, which measures 6,500-plus yards from the back tees, offers rolling fairways and requires the strategic placement of shots. In the late fall, The Tartan is offering VSGA VIP cardholders two plays Monday-Friday in November and December.

Although a couple holes have changed slightly over the years, the Tartan maintains its original Scottish design characteristic set forth by Campbell in the 1950s. The 14th hole, a 371-yard par 4, features a dual fairway effect with two separate landing options. Golfers can go left and play a tee shot short of a bunker and water, or they can blast it down the right side toward a smallish elevated green.

That's an easy choice when compared to the options available for golfers looking for a landing area throughout Eastern Virginia.

*Author J. Eric Eckard is a golf writer from North Carolina and a contributor to Virginia Golfer.*



#### TIDES INN

A cove cruise at the Tides Inn is one of the many amenities worth taking in at the resort.